

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) An isolated bacterial strain deposited with the C.N.C.M. on December 5, 2002, under the number I-2962.

Claims 9-11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) An isolated bacterial strain which is an *Exiguobacterium lactigenes* strain

said isolated bacterial strain comprising a 16S rRNA sequence of SEQ ID NO:1,
said isolated bacterial strain further comprising a DNA sequence, at least part of
which is capable of hybridizing with genomic or plasmid DNA of the strain deposited on
December 5, 2002, under the No. I-2962, with the Collection Nationale de Cultures de
Microorganismes (C.N.C.M.),

said isolated bacterial strain being thermoresistant, saccharolytic and amylolytic
and/or capable of producing L(+) lactate, and

having growth properties at temperatures of 40 to 50°C, at a pH of 5.4 to 9.15,
with an optimum for growth at 45°C, at a pH of approximately 7, and

a guanine plus cytosine content of its DNA of approximately 50 mol%

~~The bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1, wherein said 16S rRNA sequence is~~
SEQ ID NO:1.